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PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK
THE ROSE GARDEN
WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 1989
10:00 A.M.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends. I want to welcome you to the White House -- and to say what a privilege it is to meet with fellow lovers of democracy. For although Captive Nations Week is an occasion marked by sadness, it is also blessed by hope.

Today, we sound our outrage at the fate of Nations and peoples whose liberty has been held captive. But we also applaud -- more than ever -- those changes already taking place, and the changes yet to come.

Six months ago this week, I said in my Inaugural Address: "In man's heart, if not in fact, the day of the dictator is over. The totalitarian era is passing, its old ideas blown away like leaves from an ancient lifeless tree."

Well, I have just returned -- hopeful, and encouraged -- from visits to Poland and Hungary, two Nations on the threshold of historic change. And I can say to you: The old ideas are blowing away. New leaves are growing. Liberty is on the march.

For forty years, Poland and Hungary -- like so many captive Nations -- endured what has been called "the dilemma of the single alternative": one political party, one definition of

national interest, one social and economic model. In short, one future -- prescribed by an alien ideology.

But in fact, that future meant no future. For it denied to individuals, choice; to societies, pluralism; and to Nations, self-determination. Yet in Poland and Hungary, a courageous people would not yield to bayonets and barbed wire. There, as elsewhere, the lamp of liberty would not go out.

Eight days ago, I watched thousands brave a driving rain to acclaim this love of liberty. They cheered for free assembly, free press and speech, and freedom of religion. And filled a square in Budapest named after a patriot who believed in that democracy which links the people of Hungary with the peoples of the world.

Lajos Kossuth [LOY-osh KO-shooth] arrived in America in 1851 after Hungary's struggle for freedom had, temporarily, been lost. Yet in his remarks to the United States Congress, he was hopeful, not embittered. He spoke of his "steady faith in [the] principles" of self-government, opportunity, and individuality. Said he: "I trust to the future of republicanism."

My friends, the memory of Lajos Kossuth lifts us, teaches us. For he embodies the spirit of Captive Nations Week. His life was a celebration of bravery, and of conscience: The bravery that lifts the peoples of Angola and Afghanistan, Cambodia and Cuba; the conscience that says that free expression will conquer tyranny -- and courage, oppression.

When the Hungarian playwright Imre Madach [IM-reh MAW-dawch] observed, "It is so great freely to choose between the good and sinful ways," he was describing that belief. And so is the Czech writer Valav Havel [VATS-lav HAV-el], when he speaks of the need for captive people, in captive Nations, to "live in truth."

This truth dictates that liberty be political, and economic; religious, and intellectual. That people work where they want. And vote as they choose. It suggests that democratic ideals can make all things possible for a Nation, and its people. And that the individual, not the State, is the voice of tomorrow.

We see that truth across East and Central Europe. In the successful return of democracy to Pakistan. And in the Soviets' withdrawal from Afghanistan. In Africa, liberty lights those Nations moving away from state socialism, with new success in freely-elected governments and free markets. And in our hope for a Cambodia with self-determination for her people -- and a verified withdrawal, with no return to power by the Khmer Rouge.

Now, there are some who say: We've done enough. Well, we haven't. For until liberty lives among all God's children, then none of us is free. Who can forget the blood of Panama City? Or the massacre in Tiananmen Square? But the tide is moving -- toward change, economic and political. And captivity is receding -- across Europe, and the world. Globally, and historically, democracy is winning. Opening markets, and boundaries. Freeing hearts. Freeing minds.

Therefore, to the Baltic States, striving to reclaim their national destinies, we say: We support your voice -- a voice that will not be stilled. And to the peoples of Vietnam and Laos, Ethiopia and Nicaragua: America stands with you -- as brothers, and friends. To all Nations, America proclaims: Truth cannot be intimidated by force, or beaten into suppression. For only democracy can underscore the dignity of man.

Five weeks ago, thousands bannered that democracy by filling Budapest's Heroes Square -- peacefully, movingly -- to honor the heroes, and spirit, of Hungary's 1956 rebellion. Their presence celebrated the values of captive peoples everywhere. And honored the arching human spirit -- oft-abused yet free.

Among the celebrants was a patriot who, with many others, took part in that uprising. Astonished by the turnout, he found pride in Hungary's past -- and hope in freedom's future. "For this day," he said, "it is worth living and forgiving. Today, this unity is a kind of Hungarian wonder."

My friends, that wonder is liberty's wonder. In Kabul and Prague. Warsaw and Managua. In the hopes, and dreams, of people who believe in ballots, not bullets. And who survive -- who will triumph -- through family, and faith in God.

To love freedom -- to overcome oppression -- this is their spirit -- and the meaning of Captive Nations Week. Like them, we must never waver, nor surrender. Instead, let us raise -- together -- what Lajos Kossuth called "the morning star of

liberty." The star that can lead us toward tomorrow. And bless the children of the globe.

Thank you for this wonderful occasion. I will never forget it. God bless you, God bless America, and God bless the democracy that can -- that must -- make captive peoples free.

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